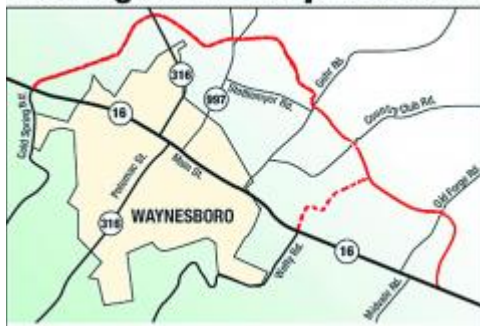


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Washington Township Boulevard



Impact fees designed to pay for a \$16.7 million relief route (shown in red) are hurting commercial growth in Washington Township, Pa., developers and Realtors told township supervisors on Wednesday. (Credit: /)

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Some say impact fees hurting growth in Washington Township

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WAYNESBORO, PA. — Impact fees designed to pay for a \$16.7 million relief route are hurting commercial growth in Washington Township, Pa., developers and Realtors told township supervisors on Wednesday.

Representatives of at least 10 major housing and commercial projects addressed the supervisors about the municipality's impact fees, which are assessed on development in a certain geographic area to pay for Washington Township Boulevard. The relief route is being built north of Waynesboro to provide motorists an alternative to Pa. 16.

Developers shared their problems with the fee of \$3,147 assessed for each "traffic unit" created by the development during peak hours. The fees to build homes aren't awful, they said, but the commercial ones are a barrier

when courting new businesses.

Waynesboro-based Realtor and developer Ronnie Martin said he lost a deal to bring a Wendy's restaurant to the area because of \$144,000 due in impact fees.

"Do you know how many burgers they have to fry for \$140,000?" he asked.

Martin, who is a Waynesboro Borough Council member, called for a two-year period in which impact fees are cut in half to jump-start growth.

Susan L. Whaley from Mid-Atlantic Realty Inc., of Gettysburg, Pa., is working with the Rite Aid Pharmacy project at the intersection of Pa. 16 and Midvale Road. She's encountered impact fees elsewhere in Pennsylvania, but not to the magnitude they're levied in Washington Township.

Rite Aid typically builds a 15,000-square-foot building costing \$1 million to \$2 million, Whaley said.

"We're looking at fees here of about \$245,000," she said, saying that amount would have a "significant, adverse impact" on any project.

Washington County Realtor Tim Light said a now void contract on the Anthony Bittner farm across from Rouzerville Commons totaled \$6.5 million for the land purchase.

"This township wanted \$1.6 million (in impact fees) to build a Target and Martin's," Light said.

He echoed Martin's call for a two-year grace period.

When impact fees were adopted in 2005, the township intended to recoup \$14.7 million in 10 years to pay for Washington Township Boulevard. Yet, the municipality has collected less than \$500,000 and will continue to dip into other reserve funds to make payments on its \$1.9 million Washington Township Boulevard bridge loan.

Some developers are opting to construct part of Washington Township Boulevard in exchange for impact fee credits.

On Wednesday, the supervisors questioned the possibility of ending the relief route at Pa. 316, rather than continuing it west to Pa. 16. They said the vast majority of remaining costs are associated with the section between Pa. 316 and Pa. 16.

Township Manager Mike Christopher encouraged the meeting's attendees to contact their congressmen to support the township's application for \$4.6 million in federal funding to complete the relief route, including traffic lights, from Old Forge Road to Pa. 316. Grading for much of that portion is mostly complete.

The supervisors said they will discuss impact fees soon, then give an already established committee direction for any studies or changes they want.

"The road has to be built. The question is how we get this" money, Supervisor Elaine Gladhill said.

"Ultimately I think you've got to reduce the fee to stimulate growth, especially in the commercial area," said William Aiello, whose WAM Enterprises is developing along Welty Road.

Waynesboro-area Realtor Paul Gunder, who is a member of the impact fees committee, said a lot previously sold for \$70,000 to \$80,000, whereas now it'll sell for \$35,000 to \$40,000.

"The impact fee has doubled relative to the cost of the real estate," he said.

Gunder also shared concerns about impact fees being levied on existing properties if they change uses.

John Helman represented Chambersburg, Pa., business Countywide Development, which is developing the Knepper property along Pa. 997. He said he's worried about 30 acres designated for commercial development.

"I can't get enough rent to buy the land, build the project and get a return," Helman said.

An auto supply store was lost to \$51,000 in impact fees, and a potential car wash is falling victim to \$105,000 in impact fees, Martin said.

"I can't catch them fast enough," he said. "They're headed out of town."

Martin said he personally passed on purchasing a parcel for development, opting instead to buy land in neighboring Antrim Township.

"I can't afford your impact fees," he said.

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